

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
AT KNOXVILLE

NATHAN LING,

PLAINTIFF,

VS

CIVIL ACTION NO: 3:20-CV-233

CAMPBELL COUNTY, TENNESSEE;
JUSTIN CRABTREE; DAKOTA WILLIAMS;
SEAN BROWN; JOSHUA MILLER, in their
individual and official capacities;
and JOHN DOES, names and identities
not yet known,

DEFENDANTS.

PRETRIAL DISCOVERY DEPOSITION OF:

MATTHEW WASSON

TAKEN ON APRIL 25, 2023

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1 neighboring county such as Anderson County is paying
2 officers \$20.00 an hour, it's going to be hard to
3 keep candidates to work. So that's just a, that's a
4 given.

5 Q. Okay. How else could this be prevented
6 other than the training and the supervision, do you
7 think?

8 A. I think training and supervision is your
9 two major points here. I don't...

10 Q. Well,...

11 A. And pay. You can get into, you can get
12 into pay, but you could also train people better to
13 perform their jobs better. Pay doesn't really have
14 anything to do with that.

15 Q. Okay. Well, we've agreed that excessive
16 force was used numerous times on Mr. Ling.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And that there were at least a half
19 dozen officers coming in and going out that were not
20 stopping that?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So how do you prevent that from -- well,
23 let me back up before I ask you that. So does it
24 appear that there is a culture of allowing excessive
25 force in the department with half a dozen people

1 watching this?

2 MR. KNIGHT: Object to the form.

3 A. I don't, I wouldn't call it a culture.

4 This is, this is an event, kind of a -- in the years
5 that I've been with the sheriff's department, this
6 is, I think, the only time that I've ever seen
7 anything like this occur.

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. So I wouldn't call it a culture thing. I
10 would say young, impressionable officers, not trained
11 as well as they should have been, and maybe people in
12 supervisory positions that probably shouldn't have
13 been in supervisory positions. I wouldn't
14 necessarily call it a culture thing as far as the
15 Campbell County Sheriff's Office. Once again, I've
16 been there for 16, going on 17 years. This is the
17 first, you know, instance that we've ever had like
18 this.

19 Q. Well, right. And that's what I'm trying
20 to figure out, is how do you keep it from occurring
21 again. You've got, you've got a half dozen officers
22 watching this take place, and nobody is intervening.
23 Nobody is trying to stop...

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. ...a man get severely beaten. True?

1 A. Yes.

2 MR. KNIGHT: Object to the form.

3 A. I don't know. I don't initially have a,
4 I mean, I don't think there's a specific answer to
5 that. I think it goes in different, just in
6 different areas. I think hiring better people,...

7 Q. Well, I want you to assume...

8 A. ...training them properly and supervising
9 them properly...

10 Q. Okay. I don't mean to talk over you.

11 A. Oh, you're fine.

12 Q. I apologize if I interrupted you. So I
13 want you to assume that his direct supervisor, Mikie
14 Owens, sends Justin Crabtree a text, and he says,
15 "Play stupid games. Win stupid prizes. Welcome to
16 Tennessee," after this picture is sent to him.
17 Doesn't that indicate a culture?

18 MR. KNIGHT: Object to the form.

19 A. I think that...

20 Q. That's his supervisor.

21 A. Yes. But you're going to have to explain
22 to me what you're meaning by a culture.

23 Q. Well, a culture of mistreating inmates or
24 mistreating arrested people.

25 A. I think, I think this is an isolated

1 incident. I wouldn't say that that's par for the
2 course. Not everybody that comes in the jail is
3 treated this specific way. I think this was on the
4 few people that were there, that something that
5 happened shouldn't have happened, but I could hardly
6 say that it's a cultural thing. It's, I think it's,
7 I think it's a handful, a small handful of people
8 that was involved in this altercation that...

9 Q. Well, we've got at least a half dozen,
10 don't we, and more, if you talk about the people that
11 were there when he was arrested?

12 MR. KNIGHT: Object to the form.

13 A. I'm not, to this day I'm still not sure
14 who was actually on scene other than John Minor in
15 his, the initial chase, foot chase. I don't know who
16 all was present during the actual arrest.

17 Q. All right. During the actual arrest,
18 there was Douglas, Minor, Crabtree, Williams, Owens
19 and Tackett.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. Okay? So that's two, four, six. And
22 then in the, in the booking room we had Crabtree,
23 Brown, Standridge, Miller and Williams. That's five.
24 Correct? Some of those were the same. True?

25 A. Yes.